BOX. 130 TRACT. 5

ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY
TRINITY COLLEGE

A

SHORT and EASIE

METHOD

WITH THE

DEISTS.

WHEREIN

The TRUTH of the CHRISTIAN RELIGION is Demonstrated, by such RULES as stand upon the Conviction of our *Outward Senses*, and which are Incompatible with the *Fabulous Histories* of the *Heathen Deities*, the Deluſion of *Mahomet*, or any other *Impoſture* whatſoever.

In a LETTER *to a Friend.*

DUBLIN:
Re-printed, and Sold by *Andrew Crook*, Printer to the King's Moſt Excellent Majeſty, on the *Blind-Key*, 1699.

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Such Minute *Contents* to ſo ſhort an *Eſſay* may ſeem Di proportionable, and Needleſs: But it was done for Ea to the Memorie of ſome for whom it was more Pa ticularly Deſign'd: And can Prejudice none, who need no ſuch Helps.

A

Short and Eaſie Method

WITH THE

DEISTS.

SIR,

IN Anſwer to Yours, of the Third Inſtant, I much condole with you your Unhappy Circumſtances of being placed amongſt ſuch Company, where, as you ſay, you continually hear the Sacred *Scriptures*, and the Hiſtories therein contain'd, particularly of *Moſes* and of *Chriſt*, and all *Reveal'd* Religion turn'd into Ridicule, by Men who ſet up for *Senſe* and *Reaſon*. And they ſay, That there is no greater Ground to believe in *Chriſt*, than in *Mahomet*: That all theſe Pretences to *Revelation* are *Cheats*, and ever have been among *Pagens*, *Jews*, *Mahometans*,

and *Chriſtians*: That they are all alike Impoſitions of *Cunning* and *Deſigning Men*, upon the *Credulity*, at firſt, of *Simple* and *Unthinking* People: till, their Numbers encreaſing, their *Deluſions* grow *Popular*, come, at laſt to be eſtabliſh'd by *Laws*, and then the force of *Education* and *Cuſtom* gives a Byaſs to the Judgments of after Ages, till ſuch *Deceits* come really to be believ'd, being receiv'd upon *Truſt* from the Ages foregoing without examining into the *Original* and *Bottom* of them. Which theſe our modern Men of *Senſe* (as they deſire to be eſteem'd) ſay, That they only do, that they only have their *Judgments* freed from the ſlavish Authority of *Precedents* and *Laws*, in Matters of *Truth*, which, they ſay, ought only to be decided by *Reaſon*. Tho' by a prudent Compliance with *Popularity* and *Laws*, they preſerve themſelves from *Outrage* and Legal *Penalties*; for none of their Complexion are addicted to *Sufferings* or *Martyrdom*.

Now, Sir, that which you deſire from me, is, ſome ſhort Topic of *Reaſon*, if ſuch can be found, whereby, without running to *Authorities*, and the intricate

Mazes of *Learning*, which breed long Disputes, and which these Men of *Reason* deny by wholesale, tho' they can give no *Reason* for it, only suppose that *Authors* have been trump'd upon us, *Interpolated* and *Corrupted*, so that no stress can be laid upon them, tho' it cannot be shewn wherein they are so *Corrupted*; which, in Reason, ought to lye upon them to prove, who alledge it; otherwise it is not only a *Precarious* but a *Guilty Plea*. However, you say, it makes your Disputes endless, and they go away with Noise and Clamour, and a Boast, That there is nothing, at least: nothing *Certain*, to be said on the *Christian* side. Therefore you are desirous to find some one *Topic* of *Reason*, which should demonstrate the Truth of the *Christian* Religion, and, at the same time, distinguish it from the *Impostures* of *Mahomet*, and the old *Pagan* World; that our *Deists* may be brought to this *Test*, and be either oblig'd to Renounce their *Reason*, and the common *Reason*, of *Mankind*, or to submit to the clear Proof, from *Reason*, of the *Christian* Religion; which must be such a *Proof*, as no *Imposture* can pretend

to, otherwiſe it cannot prove the *Chriſtian* Religion not to be an *Impoſture*. And whether ſuch a Proof, one ſingle Proof, (to avoid Confuſion) is not to be found out, you deſire to know from me.

And you ſay, that you cannot imagine but there muſt be ſuch a *Proof*, becauſe every *Truth* is in it ſelf *Clear*, and *One*; and therefore that *One* Reaſon for it, if it be the true Reaſon, muſt be ſufficient: And, if *Sufficient*, it is better than *Many*; for *Multiplicity* confounds, eſpecially to weak Judgments.

Sir, you have impos'd an hard Task upon me; I wiſh I could perform it: For tho' *Every Truth* is *One*, yet our *Sight* is ſo feeble, that we cannot (always) come to it *directly*, but by many *Inferences*, and laying of things together.

But I think that in the Caſe before us there is ſuch a *Proof* as you require; and I will ſet it down as *ſhort* and *plain* as I can.

II. Firſt then I ſuppoſe, that the *Truth of the Doctrin of* CHRIST will be ſufficiently evinced, if the *Matters of Fact* which

which are Recorded of him in the *Goſpels* be *true*; for His *Miracles*, if *True*, do vouch the *Truth* of what He deliver'd.

The ſame is to be ſaid as to *Moſes*. if he brought the Children of *Iſrael* through the *Red Sea*, in that *miraculous* manner which is related in *Exodus*, and did ſuch other wonderful things as are there told of him, it muſt neceſſarily follow, that he was ſent from GOD; Theſe being the ſtrongeſt Proofs we can deſire, and which every *Deiſt* will confeſs he wou'd acquieſce in, if he Saw them with his Eyes. Therefore the Whole of this Cauſe will depend upon the Proof of theſe *Matters* of *Fact*.

1. And the Method I will take, is, *firſt*, to lay down ſuch *Rules*, as to the *Truth* of *Matters of Fact*, that where they All meet, ſuch *Matters of Fact* cannot be *falſe*. And then, *Secondly*, to ſhew that all theſe *Rules* do meet in the *Matters of Fact* of *Moſes*, and of *Chriſt*; and that they do not meet in the *Matters of Fact* of *Mahomet*, of the *Heathen Deities*, or can poſſibly meet in any *Impoſture* whatſoever.

2. The

2. The *Rules* are these; 1st, *That the* Matter of Fact *be such, as that Mens outward Senses, their* Eyes *and* Ears, *may be Judges of it.* 2. *That it be done* Publickly *in the Face of the World.* 3. *That not only Publick* Monuments *be kept up in memory of it, but some outward* Actions *to be perform'd.* 4. *That such* Monuments *and such* Actions *or* Observances *be* Instituted, *and do* Commence *from the* Time *that the* Matter of Fact *was done.*

3. The two first *Rules* make it impossible for any such *Matters of Fact* to be impos'd upon Men, at the Time when such *Matter of Fact* was said to be done; because every Man's *Eyes* and *Senses* would contradict it. For Example: Suppose any Man shou'd pretend that Yesterday he divided the *Thames*, in presence of all the People of *London*, and carried the whole *City*, *Men*, *Women*, and *Children*, over to *Southwark* on dry Land, the *Waters* standing like Walls on both sides: I say, it is morally impossible that he cou'd perswade the People of *London* that this was true, when every *Man*, *Woman*, and *Child* cou'd contradict him, and say, That this was a notori-

notorious Falſhood, for that they had not ſeen the *Thames* ſo divided, or had gone over on dry Land. Therefore I take it for granted, (and, I ſuppoſe, with the Allowance of all the *Diefts* in the World) that no ſuch Impoſition cou'd be put upon Men, at the time when ſuch *Publick Matter of Fact* was ſaid to be done.

4. Therefore it only remains, that ſuch *Matter of Fact* might be invented ſome time after, when the Men of that Generation wherein the thing was ſaid to be done are all paſt and gone; and the Credulity of After-Ages might be impos'd upon to believe that things were done in former Ages, which were not.

And for this, the two laſt *Rules* ſecure us as much as the two firſt *Rules* in the former Caſe; for whenever ſuch a *Matter of Fact* came to be invented, if not only *Monuments* were ſaid to remain of it, but likewiſe that Publick *Actions* and *Obſervances* were conſtantly us'd ever ſince the *Matter of Fact* was ſaid to be done, the Deceit muſt be detected, by no ſuch *Monuments* appearing, and by the Experience of every *Man*, *Woman*, and *Child*, who muſt know

that

that no ſuch *Actions* or *Obſervances* were ever us'd by them. For Example: Suppoſe I ſhould now invent a Story of ſuch a thing, done a Thouſand Years ago, I might, perhaps, get ſome to believe it: But If I ſay, that not only ſuch a thing was done but that from that Day to this, every Man, at the Age of Twelve Years, had a Joint of his little Finger cut off; and, that every Man in the Nation did want a Joint of ſuch a Finger; and that this *Obſervation* was ſaid to be Part of the *Matter of Fact* done ſo many Years ago, and vouch'd as a *Proof* and *Confirmation* of it, and as having deſcended, without Interruption, and been conſtantly practis'd in memory of ſuch *Matter of Fact*, all along, from the time that ſuch *Matters of Fact* was done: I ſay, it is impoſſible I ſhould be believ'd in ſuch a Caſe, becauſe every one could contradict me, as to the *Mark* of cutting off a Joint of the Finger; and that being part of my Original *Matter of Fact*, muſt demonſtrate the whole to be falſe.

III. Let us now come to the *ſecond* Point, to ſhew, that the *Matters of Fact* of *Moſes*, and

and of *Chriſt*, have all theſe *Rules* or *Marks* before mention'd, and that neither the *Matters of Fact* of *Mahomet*, or what is reported of the *Heathen Deities* have the like; and that no *Impoſture* can have them all.

1. As to *Moſes*: His reſcuing the People of *Iſrael* out of *Egypt*, in ſuch a wonderful manner, dividing the *Red-Sea*, *&c.* is not only told, but likewiſe that the *Paſſover* was then, at that very time, *Inſtituted*; and that the *Obſervation* of it has continu'd from that time down all-along, in all the Families of the *Jews*, in Remembrance of that *miraculous* Deliverance. To the ſame purpoſe was the *Sabbath* then commanded, *Deut.* 5. 15. and ſeveral other *public* and *ſolemn* Inſtitutions.

Now, as it was impoſſible for *Moſes* to have perſwaded Six hundred thouſand Men, that he had brought them out of *Egypt*, through the *Red-Sea*, *&c.* if it had not been true; ſo, if ſuch a Story was invented in After-Ages, and the Obſervation of the *Paſſover*, from that time, ſaid to be part of the *Matter of Fact*, it muſt neceſſarily ſhew the whole to be falſe, becauſe when that Story was firſt invented, Every-body muſt

muſt know; that they had never obſerv'd any *Paſſover* in memory of ſuch a thing, or ever heard of it before; and it being told, that as certainly as ſuch a thing was done, ſo certainly was ſuch a *Paſſover* kept, and that not only by one or two, in a corner, but *Publickly*, and by the *Law* of the Nation, and in every Family: I ſay, it is full as impoſſible to make Men believe this, if it be a Lye, as to have perſwaded all thoſe Men out of their Senſes, at the time when the thing was ſaid to be done. For, let me ask, Is it not as impoſſible to make a whole Nation of Men believe that they had been all *Circumcis'd* or *Baptis'd* and did *Circumciſe* or *Baptiſe* their Children; that they kept, and always had done every *Seventh-day*; a ſolemn Yearly *Paſſover*; *&c.* If they had never done any of theſe things; and that they had not only kept theſe *Obſervations*, but likewiſe that they kept them in memory of what they had never heard of before that Day: I ſay, Is it not as impoſſible to perſwade Men to this; And is it not as much againſt their *Senſes*, as well as their *Reaſon*, as to make them believe that they had

had pass'd through a *Sea*, or any other *Matter of Fact* that can be nam'd: And the Truth of the first *Matter of Fact* said to be done so many hundred Years ago, being urged, when first invented, to be no further believ'd, than as these *Observances* have been known and practis'd; and these publick *Observances* being brought as a *Proof* and *Confirmation* of the first *Matter of Fact*, it is as much against the *Senses* of that Age wherein such Story was first invented, to believe it, as it was against the Senses of those who liv'd when such Story was said to be done, to have believ'd it at that time. And therefore where any *Matter of Fact* is attended with all the *Rules* and *Marks* before-mention'd, it is as impossible to invent it in any After-Ages, without a Discovery, as to have impos'd it upon the *Senses* of Mankind, at the time when it was said to be done.

2. Now, *Secondly*, as to our *Blessed Saviour*, his Works and Miracles, which are recorded of him in the *Gospels*, are said to be done *Publickly* in the Face of the World, as he argu'd to his Accusers, *I*

spake

ſpake openly to the world, and in ſecret have I ſaid nothing, Joh. xviii. 20. It is told, *Act.* ii. 41. that Three thouſand at one time; and, *Act.* iv. 4. that about Five thouſand at another time were converted, upon Conviction of what themſelves had ſeen, what had been done publickly before their Eyes, wherein it was impoſſible to have impos'd upon them. Therefore here were the two firſt of the *Rules* before mention'd.

Then for the two ſecond: *Baptiſm* and *the Lord's Supper* were inſtituted as perpetual *Memorials* of theſe things; and they were not inſtituted in After-Ages, but at the very time when theſe things were ſaid to be done; and have been obſerv'd without Interruption, in all Ages, through the whole Chriſtian World, down all the way from that time to this. And therefore, by what is ſaid above, it was as impoſſible to have impos'd upon Mankind in this matter, by inventing of it in After-Ages, as at the time when thoſe things were ſaid to be done.

3. The *Matters of Fact* of *Mahomet*, or what is Fabled of the *Heathen Deities*, do all want ſome of the aforeſaid *four* Rules, whereby the *Certainty* of *Matters of Fact* are demonſtrated. Firſt, for *Mahomet*, he pretended to no *Miracles*, as he tells us in his *Alcoran*, *c.* 6, *&c.* and thoſe which are commonly told of him paſs among the *Mahometans* themſelves but as *Legendary* Fables; and, as ſuch, are rejected by the *Wiſe* and *Learned* among them; as the *Legends* of their *Saints* are in the *Church* of *Rome*, See Dr. *Prideaux* his *Life of Mahomet*, pag. 34.

But, in the next place, thoſe which are told of him, do all want the Two firſt *Rules* before mention'd. For his pretended Converſe with the *Moon*; his *Meſra*, or Night-journey from *Mecca* to *Jeruſalem*, and thence to *Heaven*, &c. were not perform'd before any body. We have only his own Word for them. And they are as Groundleſs as the Deluſions of *Fox* or *Muggleton* amongſt our ſelves. The ſame is to be ſaid (in the ſecond place) of the *Fables* of the *Heathen-Gods*, of *Mercury*'s ſtealing Sheep, *Jupiter*'s turning himſelf

into a *Bull*, and the like; beſides the *Folly* and *Unworthineſs* of ſuch *ſenſeleſs* pretended *Miracles*. And moreover, the Wiſe among the *Heathen* did reckon no otherwiſe of theſe but as *Fables*, which had a *Mythologie*, or *Myſtical* meaning in them, of which ſeveral of them have given us the *Rationale*, or *Explication*. And it is plain enough that *Ovid* meant no other by all his *Metamorphoſes*.

It is true, that *Feaſts*, *Games*, and ſuch like *Publick Inſtitutions* were appointed in Memory of *Bacchus*, *Ceres*, and other of the *Heathen Deities*: But theſe want the 4th. Mark. *viz.* That ſuch *Publick Inſtitutions* ſhould *Commence* from the Time that ſuch *Actions* which they Commemorate, were ſaid to be done. Otherwiſe they cannot ſecure after Ages from the *Impoſture*, by Detecting it, at the time when firſt *Invented*, as hath been Argu'd before. But the *Bacchanalia* and other *Heathen Feaſts* were Inſtituted many Ages after what was reported of theſe Gods was ſaid to be done, and therefore can be no *Proof* of them.

IV. Now to Apply what has been ſaid, You may Challenge all the *Deiſts* in the World to ſhew any Action that is *Fabulous*, which has all the four *Rules* or *Marks* before mention'd. No; it is impoſſible. And (to Reſume a little what is ſpoke to before) the Hiſtory of *Exodus* or the *Goſpel* cou'd never have been Receiv'd, if they had not been True; becauſe the Inſtitution of the *Paſſover*, of *Baptiſm* and *the Lord's Supper* are there related, as *Memorials* then *Commenced*, and ſo to deſcend through the ſucceeding Ages: And (as I ſaid before) it is full as Impoſſible to perſuade Men, that they had kept *Paſſovers* and receiv'd *Sacraments*, if they had not done it, as that they walk'd upon their Heads, went through *Seas*, or what you pleaſe.

And the Truth of the *Matters of Fact* of *Exodus* and the *Goſpel*, being no otherwiſe preſs'd upon Men, than as they have Practis'd ſuch *Publick Inſtitutions*; it is Appealing to the *Senſes* of Mankind for the *Truth* of them: And makes it impoſſible for any to have Invented ſuch Stories in after Ages, without a Palpable Detection of the Cheat when firſt invented; as Impoſſible as to have

Impos'd upon the *Senſe* of *Mankind*, at the time, when ſuch *Publick Matters of Fact* were ſaid to be done.

V. I do not ſay, that every thing which wants theſe four *Marks* is *Falſe*: but that nothing can be *Falſe* which has them *All.*

I have no manner of Doubt that there was ſuch a Man as *Julius Cæſar*, that he Fought at *Pharſalia*, was kill'd in the *Senat-houſe*; and many other Matters of Fact of Ancient times, tho' we keep no *Publick obſervances* in Memory of them.

But this ſhews, that the *Matters of Fact* of *Moſes* and of *Chriſt* have come down to Us better Guarded than any other *Matters of Fact* how True ſoever.

And yet our *Deiſts*, who would laugh any Man out of the World, as an Irrational *Brute*, that ſhould offer to Deny *Cæſar* or *Alexander*, *Homer* or *Virgil*, their *Publick Works* and *Actions*; do, at the ſame time, value themſelves as the only Men of *Wit* and *Senſe*, of *Free*, *Generous*, and *Unbyaſt Judgments* for Ridiculing the Hiſtories of *Moſes* and *Chriſt*, that are Infinitely better Atteſted, and Guarded with Infallible *Marks*, which the others want.

VI.

VI. Beſides that the Importance of the ſubject wou'd oblige All Men to Inquire more narrowly into the one than the other: For what conſequence is it to me, or to the World, whether there was ſuch a Man as *Cæſar*, whether he Beat, or was Beaten at *Pharſalia*, whether *Homer* or *Virgil* wrote ſuch Books, and whether what is Related in the *Iliads* or *Æneids* be *True* or *Falſe*? It is not Two pence up or down to any Man in the World. And therefore it is worth no Man's while to Inquire into it, either to *Oppoſe* or *Juſtifie* the *Truth* of theſe Relations.

But our very *Souls* and *Bodies*, both this *Life* and *Eternity* are concern'd in the *Truth* of what is Related in the Holy *Scriptures*: And therefore Men would be more Inquiſitive into the Truth of theſe, than of any other *Matters of Fact*; Examine and Sift them Narrowly; and find out the *Deceit*, if any ſuch could be found: For it *concern'd* them *Nearly*; and was of the laſt *Importance* to them.

How unreaſonable then is it to Reject theſe *Matters of Fact*, ſo *Sifted*, ſo *Examin'd*, and ſo *Atteſted* as no other *Matters of Fact*

in the World ever were; and yet to think it the moſt Highly *Unreaſonable*, even to *Madneſs*, to Deny other *Matters of Fact*, which have not the thouſandth part of their *Evidence*, and are of no *Conſequence* at all to Us, whether *True* or *Falſe*!

VII. There are ſeveral other *Topicks*, from whence the Truth of the *Chriſtian* Religion is Evinced to all who will Judge by Reaſon, and give themſelves leave to *Conſider*. As the *Improbability* that ten or twelve *Poor Illiterate Fiſher-men* ſhould form a Deſign of Converting the whole World to Believe their *Deluſions* and the *Impoſſibility* of their Effecting it, without force of *Arms*, *Learning*, *Oratory*, or any one viſible thing that could Recommend them! And to Impoſe a *Doctrine* quite oppoſite to the *Luſts* and *Pleaſures* of Men, and all *Wordly Advantages*, or *Enjoyments*! And this in an Age of ſo Great *Learning* and *Sagacity* as that wherein the *Goſpel* was firſt Preached! That theſe *Apoſtels* ſhould not only undergo all the *Scorn* and *Contempt*, but the ſevereſt *Perſecutions* and moſt Cruel *Deaths* that could be inflicted, in Atteſtation to what themſelves knew to be a mere *Deceit*, and

Forgery

Forgery of their own Contriving! Some have ſuffer'd for *Errors*, which they thought to be *Truth*: But never any for what themſelves knew to be *Lyes*. And the *Apoſtles* muſt know what they taught to be *Lyes*, if it was ſo, becauſe they ſpoke of thoſe things, which they ſaid, they had both *ſeen* and *heard*, had *looked upon*, and *handled* with their *Hands*, &c. Act. iv. 20. 1 Joh. i. 1.

Neither can it be ſaid, that they, perhaps, might have Propos'd ſome Temporal Advantages to themſelves, but miſs'd of them, and met with *Sufferings* inſtead of them: For, if it had been ſo, it is more than Probable, that when they ſaw their Diſappointment, they would have diſcover'd their *Conſpiracy*; eſpecially when they might not only have ſaved *Lives*, but got Great *Rewards* for doing of it. That one of them ſhould ever have been brought to do this!

But this is not all. For they tell us, that their *Maſter* bid them expect nothing but *Sufferings* in this World. This is the Tenure of all that *Goſpel* which they taught: And they told the ſame to All whom they

Converted. So that here was no Diſappointment.

For all that were *Converted* by them were *Converted* upon the Certain Expectation of *Sufferings*, and bidden *Prepare* for it. *Chriſt* commanded his *Diſciples*, to Take up their *Croſs*, and Follow Him: And told them, that in the World they ſhould have *Tribulation*: That whoever did not Forſake *Father*, *Mother*, *Wife*, *Children*, *Lands*, and their very *Lives*, could not be his *Diſciples*: That he who *ſought to ſave his Life* in this World, ſhould *loſe* it in the next.

Now that this Deſpis'd *Doctrine* of the *Croſs* ſhould Prevail ſo *Univerſally* againſt the *Allurements* of *Fleſh* and *Blood*, and all the *Blandiſhments* of this World: Againſt all the *Rage* and *Perſecution* of all the *Kings* and *Powers* of the Earth, muſt ſhew its *Original* to be *Divine*; and its *Protector*, *Almighty*. What is it elſe, could *Conquer* without *Arms*; *Perſuade* without *Rhetorick*; overcome *Enemies*; diſarm *Tyrants*; and ſubdue *Empires* without *Oppoſition*!

VIII. We may add to all this, the Teſtimonies of the moſt bitter *Enemies* and

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Perſecutors of *Chriſtianity*, *Jews*, and *Gentiles*, to the *Truth* of the *Matter of Fact* of *Chriſt*, ſuch as *Joſephus* and *Tacitus*; of which the firſt flouriſh'd about *fourty* Years after the Death of *Chriſt*, and the other about *ſeventy* Years after: So that they were capable of Examining into the *Truth*, and wanted not *Prejudice* and *Malice* ſufficient to have Inclin'd them to deny the *Matter of Fact* it ſelf of *Chriſt*: But their Confeſſing to it, as likewiſe *Lucian*, *Celſus*, *Porpheyrie*, and *Julian* the *Apoſtate*; the *Mahometans* ſince, and all other *Enemies* of *Chriſtianity* that have Ariſen in the World, is an Undenyable Atteſtation to the Truth of the *Matter of Fact*.

IX. Theſe and other *Topicks*, which have been inſiſted upon by thoſe who have Manag'd this Argument, cannot nor ought not to be Deny'd by any Man who pretends to *Common Senſe*. And it is very Lamentable to ſee a *wide Mouth*, a *ſcornful Nod*, or *Leer*, and a *Noiſy Effrontery*, Impatient of *Argument* or *Contradiction*, carry it away with ſome *Unthinking* People againſt all the *Reaſon* and *Authority* in the World! only becauſe they ſay, that not-

withſtanding of all your *Probabilities*, however *Artfully* laid together, yet it is *Poſſible* to be otherwiſe: And they Demand, for *Matters of Fact* long ſince Paſt, a Demonſtration from the *outward Senſes* of the Preſent Age. That is, that I ſhould *See* or *Hear* what was before I was Born. Which is a Method they would *Hoot* at, if Propos'd in any other Caſe.

X. But tho' we cannot *ſee* what was done before our Time, yet by the *Marks* which I have laid down concerning the *Certainty* of *Matters of Fact* done before our Time, we may be as much Aſſur'd of the *Truth* of 'em, as if we ſaw them with our Eyes; becauſe whatever *Matter of Fact* has all the four *Marks* before mention'd, could never have been *Invented* and *Receiv'd* but upon the Conviction of the *outward Senſes* of All thoſe who did *Receive* it, as before is Demonſtrated. And therefore this *Topick* which I have Choſen, does ſtand upon the *Conviction* even of Mens *outward Senſes*. And ſince you have Confin'd me to *one* Topick, I have not Inſiſted upon the others which I have only Nam'd.

XI.

XI. And now it lies upon the *Deists*, if they wou'd appear as Men of *Reason*, to shew some *Matter of Fact* of former Ages, which they allow to be *True*, that has greater *Evidences* of its *Truth*, than the *Matters of Fact* of *Moses* and of *Christ*: Otherwise they cannot, with any shew of *Reason*, Reject the one, and yet Admit of the other.

But I have given them Greater Latitude than this, for I have shewn such *Marks* of the *Truth* of the *Matters of Fact* of *Moses* and of *Christ*, as no other *Matters of Fact* of those Times, however *True*, have but these only: And I put it upon them to shew any *Forgery* that has *All* these *Marks*.

This is a short *Issue*. Keep them close to this. This Determins the *Cases* all at Once,

Let them Produce their *Apollonius Tyanæus*, whose Life was put into *English* by the Execrable *Charles Blount*, and compar'd, with all the *Wit* and *Malice* he was Master of, to the *Life* and *Miracles* of our Blessed *Saviour*.

Let

Let them take Aid from all the *Legends* in the Church of *Rome*, those *Pious Cheats*, the foreit *Disgraces* of *Christianity*; and which have bid the fairest, of any one Contrivance, to overturn the *Certainty* of the *Miracles* of *Christ* and his *Apostles*, and whole *Truth* of the *Gospel*; by putting them All upon the same *Foot*; at least, they are so Understood by the Generality of their *Devotees*, tho' *Disown'd* and *Laugh'd at* by the *Learned*, and Men of *Sense* among them;

Let them Pick and Choose the most Probable of all the *Fables* of the *Heathen Deities*; and see if they can find in any or All of these the four *Marks* before Mention'd.

Otherwise let them submit to the Irrefragable *Certainty* of the *Christian* Religion.

XII. ut if, notwithitanding of all that is said, the *Deists* will still contend, That All this is but *Priest-Craft*, the Invention of *Priests*, for their own Profit, *&c.* Then they will give us an *Idea* of *Priests* far Different from what they Intend: For then, we must look upon these *Priests*, not only as the *Cunningest* and *Wisest* of *Mankind*; but we shall be tempted to Adore them as *Deities*, who have such Power as to Impose, at

their

their Pleaſure, upon the Senſes of Mankind, to make them believe, That they had Practis'd ſuch *Publick Inſtitutions*, Enacted them by *Laws*, taught them to their *Children*, &c. when they had never done any of theſe things, or ever ſo much as heard of them before: And then, upon the Credit of their Believing that they had done ſuch things as they never did, to make them further Believe, upon the ſame Foundation, whatever they pleas'd to Impoſe upon them as to Former Ages; I ſay, ſuch a *Power* as this muſt Exceed All that is *Humane*; and conſequently make Us Rank theſe *Prieſts* far above the Condition of *Mortals*.

2. Nay, this were to make them outdo all that has ever been Related of the *Infernal Powers*: For tho' their *Legerdemaine* has extended to Deceive ſome Unwary Beholders; and their Power of working ſome *ſeeming* Miracles has been Great, yet it never Reach'd, nor ever was ſuppos'd to Reach ſo far as to Deceive the Senſes of all Mankind, in Matters of ſuch *Publick* and *Notorious* Nature as thoſe of which we now ſpeak, to make them Believe, that they had

had Enacted *Laws* for ſuch *Publick Obſervances*, continually Practis'd them, taught them to their *Children*, and had been Inſtructed in them themſelves, from their *Childhood*, if they had never *Enacted*, *Practis'd*, *Taught*, or *been Taught* ſuch things.

3. And as this Exceeds all the *Power* of *Hell* and *Devils*, ſo is it more then ever *God Almighty* has done ſince the Foundation of the World. None of the *Miracles* that He has ſhewn, or *Belief* which he has Requir'd to any thing that he has *Reveal'd*, has ever Contradicted the *outward Senſes* of any one Man in the World, much leſs of All *Mankind* together. For *Miracles* being Appeals to our *Outward Senſes*, if they ſhould overthrow the *Certainty* of our *Outward Senſes*, muſt Deſtroy, with it, all their own *Certainty*, as to Us; ſince we have no other way to Judge of a *Miracle* Exhibited to our *Senſes*, than upon the ſuppoſition of the *Certainty* of our *Senſes*, upon which we give Credit to a *Miracle*, that is ſhewn to our *Senſes*.

4. This, by the way, is a yet Un-anſwer'd Argument againſt the *Miracle* of *Tranſubſtantiation*: And ſhews the weakneſs of

of the Defence which the *Church* of *Rome* offers for it, (from whom the *Socinians* have lick'd it up, and, of late, have Glory'd much in it amongſt Us) That the Doctrines of the *Trinity* or *Incarnation* contain as Great ſeeming Abſurdities as that of *Tranſubſtantiation*: For I wou'd ask which of our *Senſes* is it which the Doctrines of the *Trinity* or *Incarnation* do Contradict? is it our *Seeing*, *Hearing*, *Feeling*, *Taſte*, or *Smell*? Whereas *Tranſubſtantiation* do's Contradict All of theſe. Therefore the *Compariſon* is Exceedingly *ſhort*, and out of Purpoſes. But to Return.

If the *Chriſtian* Religion be a *Cheat*, and nothing elſe but the *Invention* of *Prieſts*; and carry'd on by their *Craft*, it makes their *Power* and *Wiſdom* Greater, than that of *Men*, *Angels*, or *Devils*, and more than *God* Himſelf ever yet ſhew'd or expreſs'd; to *Deceive* and *Impoſe* upon the *Senſes* of *Mankind*, in ſuch *Publick* and *Notorious Matters of Fact*.

XIII. And this *Miracle*, which the *Deiſts* muſt run into to avoid theſe Recorded of *Moſes* and *Chriſt*, is much Greater and more Aſtoniſhing than All the *Scriptures* tell of *Them*.

So

So that these Men, who Laught at All *Miracles*, are now oblig'd to Account for the Greatest of All, How the *Senses* of *Mankind* cou'd be Impos'd upon in such *Publick Matters of Fact*.

And how then they make the *Priests* the most *Contemptible* of all *Mankind*, since they make *Them* the sole *Authors* of this the *Greatest* of *Miracles*!

XIV. And since the *Deists* (these Men of *Sense* and *Reason*) have so *Vile* and *Mean* an *Idea* of the *Priests* of all *Religions*, why do they not Recover the World out of the *Possession* and *Government* of such *Blockheads*! Why do they suffer *Kings* and *States* to be led by *Them*! To Establish their *Deceits* by *Laws*; and Inflict *Penalties* upon the *Opposers* of them! Let the *Deists* try their Hands! They have been Trying; and are now very Busie about it. And free *Liberty* they have. Yet have they not Prevail'd. Nor ever yet did Prevail in any *Civiliz'd* or *Generous* Nation. And tho' they have made some *In-roads* among the *Hotentots*, and some other the Most *Brutal* Part of *Mankind*, yet are they still Exploded, and *Priests* have and do *Prevail* against them, among not only

only the *Greateſt* but *Beſt* Part of the World, and the Moſt *Glorious* for *Arts*, *Learning*, and *War*.

XV. For as the *Devil* do's Ape *God*, in His *Inſtitutions* of *Religion*, His *Feaſts*, *Sacrifices*, &c. So likewiſe in His *Prieſts*. Without whom, no *Religion*, whether *True* or *Falſe*, can ſtand. *Falſe* Religion is but a Corruption of the *True*. The *True* was before it; tho' it follow'd cloſe upon the Heels. The *Revelation* made to *Moſes* is Elder than any *Hiſtory* Extant in the Heathen World. The *Heathens*, in Imitation of Him, Pretended likewiſe to their *Revelations*; But I have given thoſe *Marks* which Diſtinguiſh them from the *True*; None of them have thoſe four Marks before mentioned. Now the *Deiſts* think all *Revelations* to be equally *Pretended*, and a *Cheat*; and the *Prieſts* of all *Religions* to be the ſame *Contrivers* and *Juglers*; and therefore they Proclaim War Equally againſt All: And are equally Engag'd to bear the brunt of All. And, if the Conteſt be only betwixt the *Deiſts*, and the *Prieſts*, which of them are the Men of the Greateſt *Parts* and *Senſe*, let the *Effects* determine it; and let

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the *Deiſts* yield the *Victory* to their *Conquerors*, who, by their own Confeſſion, carry All the World before them.

XVI. If the *Deiſts* ſay, that this is becauſe All the World are *Blockheads*, as well as theſe *Prieſts* who Govern them; that all are *Blockheads*, except the *Deiſts*, who Vote themſelves only to be *Men* of *Senſe*: This (beſides the *Modeſty* of it) will ſpoil their Great and Beloved *Topick*, in behalf of what they call *Natural* Religion, againſt the *Reveal'd. viz.* Appealing to the *Common Reaſon* of *Mankind*: This they ſet up againſt *Revelation*; think this to be ſufficient for all the Uſes of Men, here, or hereafter, (if there be any After-State) and therefore that there is no uſe of *Revelation*; this *Common Reaſon* they advance as *Infallible*, at leaſt, as the *ſureſt* Guide: Yet now cry out upon it, when it turns againſt them; when this *Common Reaſon* runs after *Revelation* (as it alwaies has done) then *Common Reaſon* is a *Beaſt*; and we moſt look for *Reaſon*, not from the *Common Sentiments* of *Mankind*, but only among the *Beaux* the *Deiſts*!

XVII.

XVII. Therefore if the *Deiſts* would avoid the *Mortification* (which will be very uneaſie to them) to *yield* and *ſubmit*, to be *ſubdu'd* and *Hew*'d down before the *Prieſts*, whom of all Mankind, they *Hate* and *Deſpiſe*; if they would avoid this. Let them confeſs, as the Truth is, That *Religion* is no Invention of *Prieſts*, but of *Divine* Original: That *Prieſts* were Inſtituted by the ſame *Author* of *Religion*; and that their *Order* is a *Perpetual* and *Living Monument* of the *Matters of Fact* of their *Religion*, Inſtituted from the *Time* that ſuch *Matters of Fact* were ſaid to be done, as the *Levites* from *Moſes*; the *Apoſtles*, and ſucceeding *Clergy* from *Chriſt*, to this Day. That no *Heathen Prieſts* can ſay the ſame: They were not Appointed by the *Gods* whom they ſerv'd, but by other in after Ages, in Honour of thoſe *Gods*. They cannot ſtand the Teſt of the *four Rules* before mentioned, which the *Chriſtian Prieſts* can do; and they *only*. And it being told in the *Matter of Fact* of *Chriſt*, that ſuch *order* of *Prieſts* were by him Inſtituted, and to Continue to the end of the World; if the *Matters of Fact* of *Chriſt* were *Falſe*, then

then whenever they came to be Invented, in after Ages, there cou'd be no ſuch *Order* of *Chriſtian Prieſts*; and the *Matters of Fact* of *Chriſt* being preſs'd to be True, no otherwiſe than as there was (at that time when they were Invented) not only Publick *Sacraments* (as before has been urg'd) but a viſible order of *Prieſts* to Adminiſter them; conſequently there being then no ſuch *order* of Man *viſible* in the World, muſt Demonſtrate the whole to be *Falſe*; and ſo make it Impoſſible to be Receiv'd under the Circumſtances before mention'd,

XVIII. Now the *Chriſtian Prieſthood*, as Inſtituted by *Chriſt* Himſelf, and continu'd by *ſucceſſion* to this Day, being as *Impregnable* and *Flagrant* a *Teſtimony* to the Truth of the *Matters of Fact* of *Chriſt*, as the *Sacraments*, or any other Publick *Inſtitution*: Beſides that, if the *Prieſthood* were taken away, the *Sacraments* and other Publick *Inſtitutions*, which are Adminiſtred by their Hands muſt Fall with them: Therefore the *Devil* has been more Brisk, and bent his Greateſt Force, in all Ages, againſt the *Prieſthood*, knowing that if *That* go down, All go's with it.

XIX.

XIX. With the *Deists*, in this Cause, are joyn'd the *Quakers* and other of our *Dissenters*, who throw off the *Succession* of our *Priesthood* (by which only it can be Demonstrated) together with the *Sacraments*, and *Publick Festivals*. And if the *Devil* cou'd have Prevail'd to have these Dropt, the *Christian Religion* wou'd lose the most *Undeniable* and *Demonstrative* Proof for the Truth of the *Matters of Fact* of our *Saviour*, upon which the Truth of His *Doctrine* do's depend. Therefore we may see the *Artifice* and *Malice* of the *Devil*, in all these Attempts: And let those wretched *Instruments* whom he *Ignorantly* (and some, by a Mis-guided *Zeal*) has Deluded thus to Undermind *Christianity*, now at last look back, and see the *Snare* in which they have been taken! for if they had Prevail'd, or ever shou'd, *Christianity* Dies with them. At least, it will be render'd *Precarious*, as a thing of which no *Certain* Proof can be given. Therefore, let those of them, who have any Zeal for the Truth, bless God that they have not Prevail'd; and quickly leave them; and let all others be aware of them.

And

And let us Conſider and Honour the *Prieſthood*, *Sacraments*, and other *Publick Inſtitutions* of *Chriſt*, not only as *Means* of *Grace*, and *Helps* to *Devotion*, but as the Great *Evidences* of the *Chriſtian Religion*.

See Dr. Cockburn's *Serm ns.* Ser. 6. p. 129.

Such *Evidences* as no *Pretended Revelation* ever had, or can have. Such as do Plainly Diſtinguiſh it from all Fooliſh *Legends* and *Impoſtures* whatſoever.

XX. And now, laſt of all, if one word of Advice wou'd not be loſt upon Men who think ſo Unmeaſurably of themſelves as the *Deiſts*, you may Repreſent to them, what a Condition they are in, who ſpend their *Life* and *Senſe* which God has given them, in Ridiculing the Greateſt of his *Bleſſings*, His *Revelations* of *Chriſt*, and by *Chriſt*, to Redeem thoſe from *Eternal Miſery*, who ſhall *Believe* in Him, and *Obey* His *Laws*. And that God, in His Wonderful *Mercy* and *Wiſdom* has ſo Guarded His *Revelations*, as that it is paſt the Power of *Men* or *Devils* to *Counterfeit*: And that there is no *Denying* of them, unleſs we will be ſo Abſurd as to Deny not only the *Reaſon*,

Reaſon, but the *Certainty* of the *outward Senſes*, not only of *one*, or *two* or *three*, but of *Mankind* in General. That this Caſe is ſo very Plain, that nothing but want of Thought can hinder any to Diſcover it. That they muſt yield it to be ſo Plain, unleſs they can ſhew ſome *Forgery* which has All the four *Marks* before ſet down. But if they cannot do this, they muſt quit their Cauſe, and yield a Happy *Victory* over themſelves: Or elſe ſit down under all that *Ignominy* with which they have Loaded the *Prieſts*, of being, not only the moſt *Pernicious* but (what will *Gall* them more) the moſt *Fooliſh* and *Inconſiderate of Mankind.*

Therefore let them not think it an under-valuing of their *Worthineſs*, that their whole Cauſe is Compriſed in leſs than two Sheets and an half of Paper: And no more time beſtow'd upon it than it is worth.

July 17th,
1697.

FINIS.